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1841 —— 1891

Fiftieth Anniversary

OF THE

Church of the Disciples

SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

AT THE

SEMI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OF THE

CHURCH OF THE DISCIPLES

3542.118

APRIL 27, 1891

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THE SERVICES.

On Monday evening, April 27, 1891, the members of the Church of the Disciples, Boston, assembled with many outside friends, numbering in all about six hundred, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the organization. The pulpit and the portrait of James Freeman Clarke were draped with flowers. Members of the Young People's Club served as ushers. After the organ voluntary, the whole assembly rose and sung, to the music of "Old Hundred," the words of the familiar hymn,—

"From all that dwell below the skies
Let the Creator's praise arise."

A multitude of voices then joined in the following

RESPONSIVE READING.

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.

What shall we render unto the Lord for all his mercies?

All things come of thee, O Lord, and we can offer only what is thine own.

But we will make mention of his goodness; we will not forget his benefits; he has made our cup run over.

His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.

We have heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them on the earth.

They shall be his people, and he himself will be with them, and be their God.

And this is the covenant he makes with all who walk in the light: he puts his law in their minds, and writes it in their hearts.

And they shall all know him, from the least of them to the greatest.

On his sons and on his daughters he will pour out his Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

They shall all be named the Priests of the Lord; men shall call them the Ministers of our God.

Thanks be to him who giveth wisdom, which in all ages entering into holy souls makes them friends of God and prophets!

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!

For the Light, which shines in holy books and holy lives,— for the glory of the Father, revealed in the face of Jesus Christ,— for the Spirit of Truth, which shows to men the things of God,—

We render thee glad thanksgiving and solemn praise, O Lord!

For the Love which casts out fear and bids us walk in the liberty and work in the service of sonship,— for the angel-song of peace on earth and good will to men, which never dies on the air nor in the heart of humanity,—

We render thee glad thanksgiving and solemn praise, O Lord!

For the Life which is the light of men,— for the Life which transforms the face of the earth and fashions in man the image of his Creator,— for the Life that knows no death, but forever makes all things new,—

We render thee glad thanksgiving and solemn praise, O Lord!

For our share in the burdens and tasks and sacrifices by which the world is redeemed from error and evil,— for the comfort and refreshment of common prayer and hymn,— for the holy fellowship which unites, by one spirit in one body, all souls that struggle and aspire,— for the precious memory of faithful ones departed,— for the communion of saints in the church militant on earth and triumphant in heaven,—

We render thee glad thanksgiving and solemn praise, O Lord!

[ALL, RISING.]

Grateful for the past and trustful for the future, in the obedient spirit of Jesus Christ, and as a company of his Disciples, we renew our covenant, and we re-dedicate our lives to the pursuit of all truth and to the practice of all righteousness.

Rev. Samuel B. Cruft then led us in prayer, after which the 117th Psalm was sung as an anthem: —

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations;
Laud him, all ye peoples!
For his mercy is great toward us;
And the truth of the Lord endureth forever.
Praise ye the Lord!"

Then followed the four papers, or addresses, printed in this pamphlet, interrupted midway by three verses of Thomas H. Gill's hymn, sung by all voices to the tune of "Coronation": —

"Our God, our God! thou shinest here;
Thine own this latter day;
To us thy radiant steps appear;
Here leads thy glorious way.

"We shine not only with the light
Thou didst shed down of yore;
On us thou streamest, strong and bright,
Thy comings are not o'er.

"We gaze on thy out-goings bright;
Down cometh thy full power;
We, the glad bearers of thy light;
This, this thy saving hour."

Among those present were several city pastors; and letters of congratulation and good will, with regret for enforced absence, were received from Rev. Messrs. E. E. Hale, Brooke Herford, E. A. Horton, and Philip Moxom. It was ten o'clock when the congregation rose and sang as a closing hymn, to the tune of "Federal Street," these two stanzas from Samuel Longfellow: —

"Lord, hear this church renew its vow,
Its solemn consecration now,
To work with heart and soul and might
For truth and freedom, love and right;

"To listen with a willing faith
To whatsoe'er the Spirit saith,
And year by year to be more true
To Him who maketh all things new."

After these services, a large part of the company repaired by invitation to the vestry, where former members of the church and guests from other societies mingled with the Disciples in happy greetings, and shared the mild refreshments. Many and hearty were the expressions of good fellowship, and we parted in a glow of gratitude and hope.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

BY HENRY WILLIAMS.

My friends, for this outline sketch of the history of the Church of the Disciples you are largely indebted to our brother, George William Bond; and none of you can regret more than myself his inability to take his place here to-night. It is rightly his, for he has followed the fortunes of our church from its very beginning, through all its vicissitudes; and he, if I mistake not, is the only surviving one of the brethren, besides myself, who signed their names on the church book at the same time that Mr. Clarke placed his own at the head of the list,— on the 27th of April, 1841, just fifty years ago to-day. He is better fitted, therefore, to give you this retrospect than any one else; far better than myself, because, after the first year, for more than five years I lived in a neighboring city, where I was a member of another religious society. I shall therefore, as far as I may, give you the record in his own words.

The period immediately following the financial crisis of 1837, when the fortunes of very many in the community were swept away, was one of intense religious excitement, and revivals in the churches that claimed to be evangelical. The liberal denominations were alike awakened; but they were disappointed to find that, while there was increased religious interest as well as activity, they failed to bring into their churches any considerable number of earnest Christian worshippers.

There had for several years existed in Boston an association of Unitarian clergy and laymen, who met from time to time at one another's houses to consult upon the general interests of their denomination; and in the winter of 1840–41 these meetings were very fully attended. There

was a general desire to bring into their congregations that numerous class who were unable to have pews of their own, and whose sense of independence or of pride — call it what you will — kept them from occupying the free seats of which there was an abundance in some of the churches. These were generally empty, unless, occasionally, strangers might be seen in them. The pews were, for the most part, occupied by those who owned or hired them ; and, however small might be their families, it was not customary to let seats in them. There might not be felt a general want of hospitality, but it was too often the case when a stranger was found sitting in one of these private pews that there was manifested a sense of intrusion. Moreover, a strong desire existed at this time for a higher degree of spiritual culture than could be obtained from the customary religious services of their congregations. There seemed to be a need in the Unitarian community for a church of a different character and organization from those already existing. Various measures for meeting this want were discussed. All were agreed that the new church must be a free church,— that is, one supported by the voluntary contributions of its members ; but the establishment of such a church seemed to many to be beset with too great obstacles to be successful. Who would be the pioneer in this untried experiment? No one presented himself, until our late pastor, James Freeman Clarke, at one of these meetings offered to undertake the work on his own responsibility. That a church organization such as has been indicated was not a new idea to him will be clearly seen in a few extracts from his correspondence with members of his family as far back as 1836, and in 1840–41, about the time of these meetings. His proposal was eagerly hailed by most, if not all, the laymen present ; but some of the clergy expressed their misgivings, and even after the formation of the church did not give it their cordial support. Mr. Clarke was looked upon by some as an innovator, who had come here to disturb the existing order of things, yet his own views were the natural outgrowth of the circumstances which had surrounded him. No sooner had he been ordained

as a minister than he had gone out into a country where liberal views were almost unknown. The simplicity and earnestness of his character brought around him many noble friends, but the general atmosphere which surrounded him was alien to his feelings and his education. He longed for the sympathy of the earnest, free spirits with whom he had been associated here in New England.

He wrote from Louisville, Ky., in March, 1836: "I sometimes think that, could I go to Boston and preach in some free church, or start a new society on rather different principles, speaking more to conscience than to intellect, more to intuitive reason than to speculative understanding, making morality and religion *one*, not *two* separate matters, I might find a number who would hear me gladly." Again, in May, 1840, he writes from Louisville: "I have made up my mind to one thing conclusively; that is, not to commit myself hastily to any new situation or work. What I next undertake I wish to continue through life. . . . If I know myself, I wish to be useful; and, whatever I do, I wish preaching always to be my chief work." In October of the same year he writes from New England: "There are many large parishes vacant where I might settle, and it would be pleasant enough to have leisure for study; but I think I could do more in a city, and am better suited for that life. . . . What I should like best would be a church founded on elective affinities, not on the purse principle. I mean a society drawn together because they like me and my ideas. To such I could do much good."

On Jan. 22, 1841, he is in Boston, and he writes: "I rise at six every morning, make my own fire, and have two hours before breakfast to work in. During a great part of the day I am walking about the city, making calls and talking about my plans for a new church in Boston. The following persons think with me and say, 'Now is the accepted time': Dr. William E. Channing, Mr. Bartol, Mr. Samuel Barrett, Samuel Joseph May, Father Taylor, Messrs. Briggs, Waterston, Sargent, Ripley, and others among the clergy: among the laity, very many energetic persons. Father Taylor said now

was the time when great good could be done by the right man. He said he wished me to try what I could do, and promised me his hearty aid. Finally, I have taken the decided step of hiring the Swedenborgian chapel for Sunday evening next *myself*, and advertising a meeting then and there. For I find, as Goethe says, that,

> 'After much consultation and longest deliberation,
> The final decision at last must still be the work of a moment.'

"If I waited for others to move, I might wait till spring. There are many secondary considerations to be dealt with. I have decided that, first, a society is needed here on a somewhat different basis from the old ones; second, that no better man is likely to undertake it than I; third, that there is no better time than the present moment. Therefore, trusting in the help of God, I am about to begin. Next Sunday night I shall preach a discourse on 'The Essentials of Christianity; or, What shall I Do to be Saved?' The second Sunday night I shall preach on 'Justification by Faith.' The third on 'The Church,' — as it was at first, as it ought to be now, as it *can* be now. After this I shall find a place to preach in both morning and night, and shall begin a series of sermons to show what I consider to be important and true in all the usual doctrines of Orthodoxy and Unitarianism. May God make me an instrument of good in this work, for surely much is needed!"

Feb. 1, 1841, of the first service he says: "I found my hall full, though Dr. Channing preached that morning in Warren Street Chapel to an overflowing audience, and Mr. Briggs, of Plymouth, at Mr. Waterston's, to a large congregation. Mr. Gannett and Dr. Parkman were present. There was nothing new or striking in what I said, but only the simple, plain truth, as I understood it. . . . To-day I spent two hours with Dr. Channing, talking about my plan of operations. He is very much interested in it, and he made many suggestions of value." In the same letter he says: "I went at night to a meeting at Judge Rogers's, to talk about the plan of a new church. A minister present

expressed fears lest individuals should be drawn away from the existing churches, and lest the Sunday evening lectures should seem to compete with another course then being delivered. But, if I were to be turned aside from my course by such minute considerations as these, I should never be able to take a single step. I cannot let the minutiæ of proprieties stop my work, which seems to me an important one. I never felt so deeply the tremendous nature of what I was undertaking as on Saturday night last."

Of the second discourse on "Justification by Faith," he says, "The chapel was full, though there were four other Unitarian services the same evening."

Feb. 11, 1841. "I am to preach my third sermon on Saturday night, on 'The Church.' My object is to show that the church is not the place to put the pious and holy people and keep them safe, but a place to put hungry sinners into and feed them with living bread and make *them* pious and good."

Feb. 18, 1841. "I had a meeting last evening to take measures toward the organization of a new society. It had been snowing, and the walking was bad; yet there were forty or fifty persons there, men and women. I stated to them the objects and principles of the church, and a committee was chosen at once to provide the hall; and it was thought we were beginning under favorable auspices. I shall probably begin to preach on Sunday after next."

On Monday, February 22, he decided on Amory Hall, at the corner of West and Washington Streets, where he preached for the first time on Sunday, February 28. In the morning every seat was occupied, and many went away, he tells us; and at night the hall was nearly full. It seats about two hundred and seventy-five persons, and among those present was Mrs. William E. Channing.

After these preliminary meetings, in which Mr. Clarke had set forth his views with regard to a new church, a meeting of the friends of the movement was held at a private house, when measures were adopted for forming a society, to bear the name of "The Church of the Disciples," intend-

ing thereby to signify that we were simply a band of scholars or disciples. At an adjourned meeting, April 27, 1841, just half a century ago to-day, a book was presented containing our present declaration of faith as a church, which had been unanimously adopted at a previous meeting.

It was this: "Our faith is in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God; and we do hereby form ourselves into a Church of his Disciples, that we may co-operate together in the study and practice of Christianity." This was then signed by all present, numbering forty-three; and eleven more names were added on the next Sunday.

Our first meeting was in a part of Amory Hall, which was then occupied as a small theatre during the week. It was entirely informal. Mr. Clarke read the hymn and asked if some one would lead the singing. One of the brethren arose and led, and without any further arrangement the congregational singing was thus continued. The good woman who had charge of the hall (Mary Sweetman), soon learning who could take the lead, would carry the list of hymns for the day to one or other of those who might be present. We soon outgrew the room we were occupying, and hired for a while Ritchie Hall in the same block, till we were able to secure the whole of Amory Hall. Afterward we found this too small for our increasing numbers, and we went to the Masonic Temple, which would seat seven hundred and fifty persons.

Then the time arrived when we thought we were strong enough to have a building of our own; and the Freeman Place Chapel was built, at a cost of about $30,000, nearly two-thirds of that amount having been contributed by members of the society and its friends, some of whom consented to furnish the remainder of the sum needed upon a mortgage of the estate. Here we seemed, for some years, to be settled in a permanent church home. Our numbers had increased, though in 1845 some of those who had helped to organize the church left us, because of Theodore Parker's being allowed to preach in Mr. Clarke's pulpit. This was a sore trial; for we knew that those who left us did so purely

on conscientious grounds. But this occurrence, which seemed to many of the society a most unfortunate one, illustrated well Mr. Clarke's character. Outwardly, it was unfortunate for a church not yet fully established to be so soon divided; but our pastor felt confident that he was right in the position which he had taken, and in him we saw no vacillation of purpose. He moved calmly on, and in time was highly honored for the very course which had at first been condemned. Moreover, not a few of those who seceded from the society came back to us in after years. Notwithstanding this and other obstacles which we had met with, Mr. Clarke had succeeded in organizing and carrying on his church as he had wished, and we felt that it was all the stronger and more united for these very trials; but in 1849 Mr. Clarke notified us that the state of his health was such that he would be forced to discontinue his pastoral services for a year certainly, and perhaps longer. The case seemed so serious and the future of the society so uncertain that, under all the circumstances, it was decided that it would be best to sell our chapel, if that could be done, and, after paying off our mortgage, fund the balance, trusting that we might yet be able to come together again and reorganize the church, when our pastor's health should be re-established. This we succeeded in doing, and afterward it enabled us to secure the Indiana Place Chapel for our church.

Mr. Clarke sailed for Europe in July, 1849, and spent eleven weeks abroad; and again in October, 1852, Mr. and Mrs. Clarke left home to spend the winter in the south of Europe, returning in June, 1853. During this interval of more than three years the society was scattered. Many, especially those with families, united with other churches; but a little band of the disciples kept together and met monthly in a hall, the use of which was given them by the Young Men's Christian Union, to conduct religious services among themselves and to partake of the Lord's Supper. "These meetings," says Mr. Bond, "in which we sat around the reading table, one and another taking the lead in the services, strengthened the religious ties which bound us

together. The communion services were among the most delightful which I ever attended, and did more than anything else to strengthen our love for one another and our pastor." A correspondence of loving and tender messages, from which we have not time now to quote, was interchanged between Mr. Clarke and his parishioners during all the period of his absence, so that when he was able, in January, 1854, to resume his labors among them, they soon gathered around this nucleus of an organization which had all the while been kept up; and the Church of the Disciples, which had never gone out of existence, assembled once more,—first in this same little hall of the Christian Union for a short period and afterwards in the Williams Hall, at the corner of Dover and Washington Streets.

Our next move was to unite with Mr. Fox's society in the Indiana Place Chapel, which, on certain conditions, became the property of the Church of the Disciples. Here we remained till we were able to build our present place of worship in 1868,—partly by the sale of the Indiana Place Chapel and largely by voluntary subscriptions of our society and its friends. Now, at last, after all our wanderings, we found ourselves in a settled home, built according to our means and the needs of the church, and, what we prized especially, *entirely free from debt.* And now you may ask yourselves, as I have many times asked myself, what it was which sustained the life and the strength of the Church of the Disciples, aside from its organization as a free church and the principles on which it was founded, through all the changes and vicissitudes which it had to encounter. For myself, I answer, it was the wonderful personality of Mr. Clarke himself. It is not easy to tell in a few words the secret of his strength and abiding influence with his people. But that which impressed me most, and more and more as the years went on, was the calmness and tranquillity of his bearing, at all times and under all circumstances. He never seemed to be taken by surprise or to lose his composure, no matter what the provocation, no matter what the perplexity. This quality of his nature brought repose and

strength to those who went to him for comfort and help, because they instinctively felt that it had its source in the very springs of his being. His simplicity and absolute sincerity inspired a confidence and trust which made us listen to his teachings, though we might not always agree with him. It was the sweet reasonableness of the man, his patience and his unbounded charity, that persuaded us. He was so candid, so ready to discern the good in the midst of error and evil, that he disarmed our prejudices, we hardly knew when or how. I have often winced under his criticism of some of my political idols; but I never rebelled or refused to hearken, and, in the end, I for the most part found myself acquiescing in his judgments.

In the old Indiana Place Chapel, for many years we had weekly evening meetings, in which we discussed questions of religion and morality, church dogmas, Scripture texts, and the various reform movements in the community. All who can go back to those days must vividly recall the spirit which prevailed at those meetings. It was not a debating society where triumphs are won or honors reached after. It was a genuine and simple interchange of opinions, an eager search for the truth, in which the perplexing problems of life and duty were weighed and considered. And here it was that our pastor's peculiar characteristics came out. Under his guidance and encouragement, the timid,— brethren and sisters alike,— who hardly durst listen to the sound of their own voices, would be drawn forth, and contribute their share in the conversation. Mr. Bond reminds me of the strong help we had in those meetings from a curly-haired youth, our brother John A. Andrew, who, when it came to the discussion of passages from the Bible, displayed a familiarity with the Scripture unsurpassed even by Mr. Clarke himself. There was, not infrequently, a wide difference of opinion among those present; and perhaps the most striking feature of these discussions was the calm, judicial summing up by our pastor of all which had been spoken. Sifting the chaff from the wheat, he would give us the conclusion of the whole matter; often in a few words, but in a

way the kindest and the most encouraging, so that no one's feelings were wounded, and no thought of slight or discouragement could be left in the mind of any one who had contributed ever so little to the instruction of the evening. We went away sobered, it may be, but with new insight, and a consciousness that there had been great gain in our coming together. This — if a faint one — is no imaginary portraiture; and these meetings, I think, helped greatly to sustain the life and growth of our church. Since those days many, very many, have left us who contributed in making the Church of the Disciples what it then was and to give to it the character it has to-day.

It is reserved for others to speak of the place which our church holds in the community and of its future, but I may be permitted to close with a few words as to its present welfare.

Two short years have passed, and we all feel, I think, to-night, that we have been greatly blessed in the choice of a successor to him whose life's work was so identified with this society. The strength of the church has been steadily increasing, all its former activities have been kept up, and seventy-four names during this period have been added to our church book. Our new pastor has made for himself a place in our hearts. Besides this, he has always spoken to our reason and intelligence, and to our deepest religious convictions. Without these two gains our cup were only half full. These are not words of praise, much less of flattery: they are the words of very truth and soberness. I could not say less, and I may not say more in his presence.

PRINCIPLES, METHODS, AND RESULTS.

BY WILLIAM C. WILLIAMSON.

Fifty years ago to-day a few persons came together in Boston and held a religious meeting. A small hall had been engaged, James Freeman Clarke was present as the minister, forty-three persons, men and women, subscribed their names to a Declaration of Faith and Purpose, and the Church of the Disciples began its existence. "Our faith is in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. And we hereby form ourselves into a Church of his Disciples, that we may co-operate together in the study and practice of Christianity."

These brief words and this simple act on the part of the organizers of this religious society comprise all its doctrines and conditions of membership, all its canons, its creed, its thirty-nine articles, as plain, broad, simple, but all-embracing as those of the primitive church on the hillside of Galilee.

Yet it is not to be assumed from this brevity of statement that no definite and well-matured design went to the construction of the above declaration. We should do great injustice to the individual peculiarities and strong independence of the original subscribers to this paper and to their immediate associates, whose names were soon after appended thereto, if we did not feel assured that the above two articles of faith and promise, informal as they appear, were the outcome and remainder of a most thorough deliberation, of sharp and exhaustive logical and theological criticisms, from every possible point of view. With Mr. Clarke it was no new idea,—this simple form of church establishment. "I have been studying and preparing for it for years, and have full faith that it will be effective," he writes in a letter of that year.

Let us take a survey of religious conditions in Boston at the time referred to. In 1841 Unitarianism was emerging from a long and somewhat imbittered conflict. After enduring an assailment for about thirty years, during which time it had strongly stood and defended its cause against the attacks of a trinitarian church militant, it was at last rising, as we sometimes see the full moon arise out of a twilight of tempest into a heaven of serenity and light.

It had won — if we may speak in this metaphorical fashion of spiritual things — the battle. Long before 1841, of the original churches which existed in Boston at the close of the war of the Revolution, all but two had become Unitarian. But meantime numerous Trinitarian churches had newly sprung into existence, and it was from these that the religious warfare proceeded. Hundreds of pamphlets, sermons, and collections of newspaper articles, crammed with theological polemics, now laid away in holy rest amid the dust of libraries, bear witness to the warmth and vigor of this engagement, wherein laymen as well as the clergy went forth to battle armed with a technical vocabulary which to us of this day looks as uncouth and unintelligible as those curious weapons which we see hung up in museums as illustrations of the warfare of the feudal ages. And it must be allowed for our Unitarians that they never failed to come forth to take up the wordy challenge, and that they never showed the white feather.

The Unitarian pulpit in this city fifty years ago was adorned by ministers who, while greatly differing in individual gifts, were all of eminent powers. Their hold upon the affections, the sympathies, and confidence of their respective congregations extended beyond their lives, and even unto the second and third generation of them that knew them; and to-day their memory is still personal and vivid. Who of us can read that grand roll of names without emotion? The great and good Channing, whose earthly life was then nearing its western horizon, but was to leave no night nor darkness behind it; Ezra Stiles Gannett, worthy to be the associate and successor even of

Channing; Francis W. P. Greenwood, of King's Chapel; the refined and scholarly Frothingham; Rev. Dr. Lothrop, sturdy, manly, earnest; Chandler Robbins, conservative of all that he thought wise and right; John Pierpont, better poet and reformer than preacher, but always a Christian warrior, whose tall, erect figure I recall for the last time as he carried himself in stately march down Court Street, on his way to the front, the chaplain of a Massachusetts regiment; and Cyrus Bartol, whose venerable form and saintly face are even yet, thank God! a living benediction.

Our Church of the Disciples, with its great, broad, sunny field of doctrine and simple ritual, and its astonishing disregard of the ordinary means of support, was received — one can hardly say welcomed — by its sisters of the denomination with entire graciousness. But I cannot find that its plan was regarded by them with much approval. Certainly it was not welcomed by them with any public show of confidence, still less was it greeted with any spontaneity of enthusiasm. It owned no property, levied no taxes, paid no more regard to a rich man than to a poor man. Even its existence as a church was ignored by the general census. In the ample list of seventy churches and religious denominations which may be found in the Boston Directories for 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1844, one may search in vain for the local habitation and the name of this Church.

What want of the soul could it satisfy, what demand called it into being, what message or mission did it bring to the mind, the heart, or the conscience, that was not already better provided by older, if not abler, ministries?

Its principles were as elementary as those contained in the first lines of our National Declaration of Independence, — all members shall be equal, and all shall be free. Its government was to be that of a religious democracy. It was to have many social and charitable as well as religious duties, all parcelled out among appropriate committees. It would have no wardens, elders, vestrymen, not even a deacon. A committee on finance was to "take charge," as the arti-

cle expresses it, "of the business affairs"; but (what is especially characteristic of its founders) no provision was made for paying or contracting to pay a salary to its minister. All the seats were free. The communion service, also, was freely open,— not alone, as the phrase of invitation ran from other pulpits of that day, to "members of this church and those in regular standing in other churches," but even to sinners. What, it was argued, is the design of this sacred memorial? The self-gratulation of a select number of Christians who profess themselves to be such, or is it for the encouragement, help, and education of those who, not daring to declare themselves Christians, desire to know what they have to learn and what to do, in order to become such?

It was a favorite idea with Mr. Clarke that the minister was not raised in authority above his people, but was only their associate and coworker; and in his unassuming and lovely manner he would gladly, and very profitably, too, as he thought, have exchanged places with any of these associates who might wish or be willing to instruct him, as well as others, from the pulpit. It is pleasant to recall that, acting upon this theory, this society, during Mr. Clarke's long illness and absence, maintained for nearly four years a regular service of communion, prayer, and hymn, with no aid from without, thus illustrating the truth and sufficiency of its primitive original.

There were three innovations which this organization saw fit to make in the general routine and usages of congregational churches: —

First.— The change from the pew system to the free-seat system.

Second.— Social meetings of all who might desire to assemble together for friendly intercourse or for benevolent or educational purposes.

Third.— Certain new features in the Sunday service.

First, let us note the improvements in the service. The plan was to make the Sunday worship a real union and communion of heart and voice, in which not the minister and choir only, but the whole congregation, might take an

audible part. The usual Sunday service, in all except the Catholic and Episcopal churches, seemed cold and formal; and it was believed that some part might be advantageously borrowed from the ritual of these churches,— something from the heartiness and warmth of the Methodists, something, also, from that

> "still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offerings of prayer and praise."

When Rev. Dr. Freeman, of King's Chapel, came forth from Trinitarianism and led his people with him, all were so dearly attached to their time-honored litany that they could not abandon it altogether, but retained it with certain modifications. And so for over a hundred years the liturgical form of Episcopal worship has been used in that Unitarian church; and in some other Unitarian societies, where the original reasons for its adoption did not exist, the same or a similar responsive service is in common use.

The responsive reading of the psalms which has been familiar to us from the beginning, without change or interruption, is the strongest proof which can be given of its acceptability and of the reasonableness of its introduction. There has never been, so far as I am informed, any proposal made to abandon this feature; nor has a better one been suggested.

Similar reasons applied to congregational singing; and, although this part of our service has not met with the same unanimity of approval, there is, certainly with us, a general conviction that it is founded on the right principle, and that singing in which the entire congregation take part can be so improved and elevated that it will continually be an acceptable service, even to those who at present do not find it quite satisfactory.

It was intended also that social intercourse should be a prominent element in the new departure. One of our Unitarian clergymen once remarked to a friend that two ladies, who were regular attendants upon his ministration, had walked up and down the same broad aisle for more

than thirty years, yet had never made each other's acquaintance. James Freeman Clarke wished that all the people of this society should know one another and have frequent social meetings; and he took a peculiar care to make these meetings attractive and productive of good and permanent results. He loved to see his fellow-students and worshippers, and to talk with them in his friendly, familiar way. He desired that the lives, not alone of saints and martyrs, but of all persons who, in modern times, have rendered eminent service to mankind, be fitly remembered and commemorated in this place, and that the most important epochs in our national life be the occasion of illustrating the ideas which led to great events. So we have his "Calendar of the Religious Year according to the Church of the Disciples," setting forth a long list of names and anniversaries.

In December, 1842, on Forefathers' Day, he read to this society an original poem on the Pilgrim Fathers, of which the following are the opening lines: —

"That ancient church which understood the way
So well upon the human heart to play,
And so sagaciously the means could find
Which from without might influence the mind,
Adapted all its solemn liturgy
To sense, imagination, memory;
And to each day a sacred meaning lent
By patron saint or memorable event:
Thus walking with her sons the year around,
And treading every day on hallowed ground."

The decided stand which our organization took at the outset in declaring that all seats at its service should be free, with no exception whatever (as opposed to what is called the Pew System), is the most important feature in our material history. It seems strange that the pew system should have been brought from England, where it originated, by the Puritans; for they were then in hot revolt from the arbitrary forms of the Established Church, and grasped with avidity every opportunity of showing that they meant to get as far

away from her as possible. But perhaps this is not more strange than that these same Puritans, who came away for the avowed purpose of obtaining freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their individual consciences, should have denied that freedom to all who were not of their narrow way of religious thinking. Nor is it so strange as that the descendants of these same Puritans, who had found it utterly against conscience to pay tithes for the maintenance of an establishment in the creed of which they could not acquiesce, should in Massachusetts, down to the year 1833, have required all persons to be taxed to support a religious ministry, whether they could or could not believe in its doctrines.

The arguments for and against the pew system have been often repeated. In the first place, it is a goodly sight when all the members of one household sit together in the same familiar places at the Sunday meeting year after year. It has been said that the introduction of free seats would tend to break up this family union, and also the family habit of regular church-going; that its members would be isolated one from another, and that at times, when the service was to be unusually interesting, habitual attendants would be obliged to take back seats or no seats, and that this is in contradiction to the plain rule that people should have the right to enjoy the privileges which they pay for.

All this is plausible. As a matter of fact, however, is not this result, so far as our own experience in this church goes, one which rarely happens? And, whatever occasional inconveniences arise from the system of free seats, are they not outweighed by the more substantial ones in its favor? Arguments on the side of comfort and convenience may well be used in reference to the concert and the lecture room; but are they worthy of the same consideration when applied to the church of God? Are the pews capable, I will not say of *intending*, but of *expressing*, an open hospitality and sincere welcome to the uninvited stranger and the unintroduced guest?

The pastor may preach upon the duty of giving a cordial

welcome to all new-comers, and the people may believe in it theoretically; but do you and I, strangers and Sunday vagrants, for example, feel quite at ease in entering the pew of any Christian church unbidden? The pews are repellent to the stranger and casual attendant, no matter what the pulpit and the pews may declare to the contrary. Besides, this system sometimes impedes the growth and consequent life and usefulness of the religious body itself. Pews are usually sold or rented to the head of the family. But in the course of time there come domestic changes. Children grow to maturity and leave the father's roof. Long absence, ill health, indifference, or other valid causes, prevent the family pew from being filled. Its seats are vacant Sunday after Sunday. Yet the taxes or rent will still be paid. This will often be done from motives of pride, if not of duty.

Again, it has been argued that taxation affords the most convenient as well as the only certain means of raising money for the salary of the minister and the current expenses of the society. In 1841 this matter was fully considered by those who subscribed to the original plan of this church. The voluntary support of a church was at that time, in this community, a novelty and an experiment. Later, in 1846, many Episcopal clergymen advocated the free system in a series of able sermons. Perhaps the best argument in favor of untaxed seats, showing that churches can be built and maintained wholly by voluntary offerings, may be found in the Church of the Advent, in this city, and in the facts within our own experience.

From England, in 1856, Richard H. Dana, a stanch Churchman, writes: "It is the free sittings, the frequent services, the hard workings in charities and religious duties, which must save the Church of England. Wherever I have seen these, the church has prospered. But the privileged seats of the great and rich, the locked pews, the infrequent services, detach the earnest and the poor."

Not only have we been supported without any kind of taxation whatever, not only has there been no distinction

here between the rich and the poor, those who give much and those who give nothing, but the support accorded to us has been free and voluntary, in the extreme and absolute sense of the words.

This deserves to be plainly stated. Having been for fifteen years a regular attendant here, I have never heard any discussion or remark concerning the amount contributed by other persons, nor any suggestion that A paid so much, and that B ought to pay this or that sum; nor have I, during my two years' membership of the Finance Committee, seen the list of subscriptions, nor had occasion to know what any individual has contributed.

Conducted in this way, one might naturally suppose that the annual amount of subscriptions would be a variable and uncertain quantity, and that the business part of our work could not be laid out in advance upon a definite plan.

The result of our experience is quite the opposite. The pecuniary support freely accorded to this church has been, year by year, of surprising uniformity; and for the last fifteen years, at least, it has been not only of the same average value, but the sum has been as certain, and as confidently to be reckoned upon in advance, as any income based upon taxation.

True it is that we have had to practise economy. The salary paid to our minister is not, and has never been, what it ought to be, as compared with that of other ministers in this city. We pay no salary to a choir, and prudence has been and must be exercised in expenditures; but the close of every year has thus far found every debt paid.

What Mr. Clarke thought of the result of this system, after forty-six years of experience, he stated from this pulpit in the following words: —

"I am grateful for being permitted to belong to a church which has kept its doors and seats open to all, where the stranger is made to feel at home, where there are no distinctions and no separation,— a church which is not managed by a few pew-owners, but by all the society, both men and women; which has a large nucleus of permanent members,

but also a new congregation each Sunday of transient guests; which has contained all shades of political, religious, and social differences, but where all are brothers and sisters, and where there is small chance of inward dissension, since, if any one is dissatisfied, not being anchored by a pew, he can go quietly elsewhere, and find a church home which suits him better.

"Among our most valued members have been those who, favored by circumstances, have had hearts yet larger than their means, like two of our founders, Mr. Samuel Cabot and Mr. Henry B. Rogers. Others whom we love and honor are hard-working people, working for others, and helping to support a parent or educate younger brothers and sisters. Of one such, years ago, her nephew spoke to me after church as 'Aunt Mary.' Governor Andrew, who was standing near, said to him, 'She is closer to us than that,— she is our Sister Mary.'"

This church has never laid down a formal platform of doctrine. It has never concerned itself with the metaphysics of theology. Nor has it abated one jot from its original declaration,— "faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God." To this broad creed it adds no word of amplification, and nothing shall be taken from it. Since this society was founded, others in the extreme West, as well as in the East, have been gathered and carried forward upon principles no less broad and all-uniting. The result with us and with them has been that petty divisions and schisms have been impossible. The doors of this house swing easily both ways.

Yet never has freedom of thought, encouraged by our liberal formula, degenerated into what is called popularly "free thinking," nor into infidelity toward God or toward humanity, nor into those vagaries of imagination with which small philosophers sometimes delude themselves and a limited number of followers. A large and wholesome faith in God and man, humble, receptive, "without partiality and without hypocrisy," has been characteristic of our open church. And this can be truthfully said of it,— that it has vindicated its original plan, and has grown strong upon those plain and sensible foundations on which it was built.

We cannot review its origin and progress without seeing at every point the guiding hand of him who was, by the grace of God, for nearly fifty years its first minister. It was James Freeman Clarke who laid its corner-stone. His courage, patience, and never-wavering faith carried it safely through trials which have long since become things of the past.

We have read in his admirable biography, just now published, about the immense variety of Mr. Clarke's labors; and throughout the manifold activities of his life it is everywhere apparent that the work in which he most delighted was here in this church. He loved it, he believed in it, he gave his life to it. Let us recall his love, his faith, his tenderness, his devotion, with joy and grateful hearts to-day in this holy place.

What shall be its future? What is this organization which we call a church for? Is it that we, brethren and sisters, may meet here Sunday after Sunday, join in response to the sublime aspirations of David, and the singing of sacred hymns, listen with critical interest to the lessons from our good minister, repeat together the one universal prayer of Jesus, and then depart, and think no more about these things? All these observances are comfortable to the soul; but, according to the plan of this organization, they should be the smallest part of that duty and devotion faithfully carried into practice by our predecessors in this sacred trust. In learning and teaching the truth, we have also duties to perform apart from those of worship. We are here to examine and decide by the Christian standard of right and wrong, and not by the rule of compromise or expediency, important and vital questions which demand to be heard and answered,—all manner of reforms, the ethics of temperance, the methods and aims of education, especially the right and just way of dealing with that important problem already casting before it the shadow of its coming,—the future administration and control of our public schools; the management and limits of public charities; the best forms of alleviation and prevention to be applied to the sufferings of those

who are the victims of circumstances; the civil emancipation of woman, and the restoration to her of what has been wrested from her,—the right of equality with man.

What can one small band of Christian students accomplish toward these great objects? An answer may be found by turning back a few pages in our history.

This church has for fifty years supported the ministry of Christ. Three institutions, at least, have originated in its social meetings,—"The Temporary Home for Destitute Children," the "Children's Aid Society," and the "Home for Aged Colored Women."

During the Rebellion it contributed largely and unceasingly to the comfort of our soldiers in the field, and, the war being over, it helped to establish the "Freedmen's Aid Society"; and since 1863 it has maintained a teacher among the freedmen in South Carolina, at an average outlay of $450 annually. It has paid for a free bed at the Hospital for Women and Children. Its treasurer's books show that since 1854 it has contributed $30,000 to the American Unitarian Association, or an average of $1,000 yearly; and these books also show a large number of occasional objects of its generous charity, and of the good works which from year to year it has found means to do. It has built and owns its house of worship, and there is not and has never been any mortgage upon it.

Consider the kind hands filled with substantial aid which in its early years it held out to the fugitive slave, and the decisive stand which it took in his behalf at a time when some of its contemporaries were hesitating and undecided whether or not they had aught to say or to do in his defence.

Consider the influence which it had in shaping, establishing, and sustaining, by argument and deed, by "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," that powerful and finally irresistible public opinion in the North which never faltered nor wavered until it resulted in the victory over slavery. James Freeman Clarke, Samuel J. May, Ellis Gray Loring, John A. Andrew, George William Bond, Julia Ward Howe, — these were the voices which spoke the unanimous convictions of this church.

Let us enter upon the second half of its century with entire confidence and courage. Let us mentally agree now and here that we will keep its future true to its early covenant of faith and purpose. Let us do all that we can to make its service cheerful and attractive, but, above all, to keep it sincere. Let us do all that in us lies to show to our minister that we are on his side, ready to lend a hand in whatever work he may have for us to do, and never assume that we have done our whole duty *to him* by meeting him in this place once a week in the cold attitude of listeners. Let us take part in the social and secular meetings and lessons which find an appropriate place within these walls. Let us make music a more attractive part in our public worship. Above all, let us put off all manner of doubt, indecision, and indifference concerning the future of the Church of the Disciples. That has been long since and finally decided.

The past is full of encouragement, the future bright with opportunities. Its work shall still go forward beyond its fifty years.

"My tongue repeats her vows,
Peace to this sacred house!
For here my friends and kindred dwell;
And, since my glorious God
Makes thee his blest abode,
My soul shall ever love thee well."

THE MINISTRY OF JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

BY JULIA WARD HOWE.

The first mention made to me of James Freeman Clarke was made without his name. It must have been quite early in the forties that a friend spoke to me of a young minister who had officiated at a recent funeral. My informant dwelt upon the sorrow of the young wife of the deceased, and also upon the uplifting and consoling character of the funeral service, particularly mentioning the silent prayer, by which feature, at a later day, I was able to recognize the "young minister." At the time first spoken of I was only a visitor in Boston. Some years later, having become a resident and householder in the city, I made Mr. Clarke's acquaintance. My first sight of him was at a meeting of a small club, of which he and Theodore Parker were prominent members. This meeting was at my own house. Mr. Parker was, as I remember, the principal speaker; but Mr. Clarke bore his part also in the conference. It was in the course of this winter or the next that Mr. Clarke was afflicted by the loss of his eldest son. This beautiful boy once came to my house with a note of invitation from his parents, and I thus had sight of a bright, lovely countenance which soon faded from the earth.

I had not at this time the most remote idea of what Mr. Clarke really was. I was an enthusiastic hearer of Mr. Parker, and cared to listen to no one else. I remember going once to hear Mr. Clarke at Freeman Place Chapel, and I recall dimly the fact of Mr. Parker's preaching at the chapel. I think that I must have heard him on that occasion, without having myself any notion of what this exchange of pulpits implied or of what it would bring to Mr. Clarke.

I then remember hearing of his illness, of his retirement from Freeman Place Chapel, and of his travels in Europe. Some said that his health had failed, and that his continuance in the ministry appeared very doubtful.

Some years later I was present at a Sunday service of the Twenty-eighth Congregational Church in the course of which Theodore Parker took occasion to make a special and very laudatory mention of Mr. Clarke, who had returned from Europe, and was about to commence his second term of ministry in Boston. I remember only one of Mr. Parker's phrases applied to Mr. Clarke, "a man of competent learning"; but I recall the spirit of what he said as very cordial.

A question arose at this time in my family. Our eldest children had grown old enough to attend service; and Dr. Howe, who dearly loved Theodore Parker, objected to the want of religious form in his meeting as not calculated to inspire reverence in the minds of young children, on whom the aspect and atmosphere of the place would make more impression than the matter discoursed of in the sermon. Very reluctantly I withdrew from the Twenty-eighth Congregational, and sought for myself and my little ones a new spiritual home. I knew that the Church of the Disciples would not be a fashionable museum of bonnets, and that an earnest heart religion would be preached there. After some uncertainty, I became a regular attendant upon the services held by Mr. Clarke at Williams Hall. I confess that on a stormy Sunday I sometimes ran off to hear Parker. I cannot tell how Mr. Clarke gradually got the better of a sort of opposition which grew out of my old affection for Mr. Parker. Insensibly, I began to listen to him with interest and attention, and to feel a certain fellowship with the flock of which he was the pastor.

The removal of the society from Williams Hall to the church in Indiana Place was undoubtedly an important event in its early history. In the earlier place of assemblage I for one always felt the difference between the transient and the permanent. The temporary arrangement was indeed satisfactory enough; but, when once we had a building of our

own, the central attraction became stronger, and the union of members more sympathetic and harmonious. I particularly remember the celebration of Mr. Clarke's fiftieth birthday in the Indiana Place rooms as one which brought us all together with a feeling of our obligations to the dear pastor, and to each other. It was on this occasion, I think, that Mr. Clarke asked me to write my name in the book of church membership, which I was glad to do; for by this time my mind had become fixed in its allegiance to the organization. I may add that, when the ministry of Theodore Parker ceased, some of the most thoughtful of his people joined themselves to our society. Of these I will only mention our dear Abby W. May, who in her gracious youth was one of the beloved lambs of Parker's congregation, and who gave to us the glory and dignity of her later womanhood.

Our comfort suffered some eclipse during the long absences which ensued upon Mr. Clarke's acceptance of the secretaryship of the then newly vivified Unitarian Association. Most of us were fully aware, I think, of the importance of the considerations which led him to this step; and we held on, feeling that what was our loss was great gain to our denomination, and through that to Christendom itself.

But it was, indeed, a relief when hope deferred no longer made our heart sick, and when, having flown hither and thither with his precious evangel, our minister felt that his mission abroad was ended, and returned to stay.

I think that Mr. Clarke was very sure of the steadfastness of his church when he consented to assume the arduous duties which carried him so often and so far away from us. And I must say that his pulpit, during his absences, was filled by persons who were selected with great care, and whom it was, in almost every instance, good to hear. I remember among these Dr. Hedge of beloved memory, the elder Henry James, David Wasson, Father Taylor, Dr. Peabody. Henry Foote, of the Stone Chapel, preached for us on one occasion. After the sermon I went up, with others, to thank him for an excellent discourse. He smiled, and shook his head. "Ah, Mrs. Howe," said he, "we *other*

ministers don't like to come here, you all love Mr. Clarke so much!" and I could not contradict him.

From this time on I should say that the history of our church was one of constant and evident growth. The bond of union among us was greatly strengthened by the long agony of the Civil War, preceded as it was by a war of opinion scarcely less painful to endure. I remember the services on the day of John Brown's execution, or soon after that, as deeply touching and uplifting. President Buchanan's Fast was also made the occasion of a memorable meeting. But most of all do I recall the Sunday that followed the death of Abraham Lincoln,—the purple pall, with its crowns of Easter lilies, the hushed, tearful, solemn gathering, the feeling that our church was our fortress, a place of refuge where Despair could not reach us. For our minister, so beautiful and gracious of spirit in peace, in war became a herald of victory. His strong conviction and unwavering faith led us, as in a solid phalanx, to dare, to do, and to suffer, sure that, whether our arms should conquer in the field or not, the truth in which we believed, and for which we contended, would in the end be established.

When we first removed to the church in Indiana Place, we had room enough and to spare. But in process of time the congregation outgrew its former limits, and the necessity of a larger and more commodious building became manifest. Our society was neither fashionable nor wealthy, and the starting of the new enterprise was a matter of some doubt and difficulty. I remember the celebration of our twenty-fifth anniversary, which took place at Mercantile Hall. The late Dr. Gannett was present, and in the course of his remarks said that the only good thing which remained for him to wish for Mr. Clarke was a larger church.

It was a happy day for us when that larger church was added to our other blessings. I, for one, will plead guilty to a great elation of spirit at that time. And yet the smaller chapel was consecrated to us by most precious memories. The true building up of our society was well accomplished before we left that modest place of worship for a more suita-

ble tabernacle; and, but for the one work, we should never have accomplished the other.

It seems to me that the conjunction between Theodore Parker and Mr. Clarke, although unwelcome to many at the time, had in it a certain fitness. The same divine fire of zeal and earnestness was in both of these men. Both were uncompromising witnesses for the truth, and for freedom in its interpretation. Mr. Parker's procedure was the more critical of the two; and, as I think, through the partial interpretation of his work and character, he became the apostle rather of those who hold religion in suspense than of those who fervently believe. Many of those who heard and admired him did not penetrate into the sacred and tender religiousness of his nature. Mr. Clarke's work was throughout edifying. Parker did much to pull down a sham church, a false and formal Christianity. Mr. Clarke did much toward the building of a true church and the vindication of a genuine Christianity. I, who had the joy of hearing them both, am glad that I had the one before the other. In remembering them, I see Parker on the shadow side of the time, with immense problems and uncertainties looming up before him, armed with a hammer, like Judas Maccabæus; with a sword, like Peter, who would have smitten those who sought to lay hands upon his Master. The great order moved on; and Mr. Clarke, who lived to see the sweet unfolding of the bitter bud, came out of the war cloud and smoke with a serene countenance into the sunlight of reconciliation and of peace that *was* peace.

When I think of what Mr. Parker wanted to do for women, and what Mr. Clarke did for them, I feel still more how the doing of the one supplemented the willing of the other. The war, meanwhile, had brought us women to the front. We had before been content to inherit the deserts of the age that preceded ours. We were now compelled to acquire merits of our own. Divine Providence seemed to interrogate us thus: "Can you stand for the truth through evil report and good report? Can you answer the trumpet call with an 'I am ready'? Can you leave your fine clothes and

fine fashions to care for the wounds of the battlefield and the fevers of the camp?" To all this we had answered, "Yes." And this assent had been for us the pledge of a new baptism.

I do not forget that in Parker's sermons the rights and wrongs of women were freely spoken of. The higher education, the larger opportunity, were again and again claimed for them. In his pulpit were heard Antoinette Brown, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith. But the time was not yet ripe for our question. The war had to come first, and to carry the world on in the way of freedom so far as to bring to view the final great clause of liberation by which the shackles of disability should be removed from the woman's quick conscience and sensitive heart. I saw Parker's lip curl a little when he announced that Rev. Antoinette Brown would preach to his congregation on a certain Sunday. He told me once of two young girls somewhere in the Northeast who had written him of their intention of coming to Boston, where one of them would study theology with him, while the other would study law with Wendell Phillips. This proposition seemed to him at the time chimerical, and indeed was so. To-day it would surprise no one.

Mr. Clarke's participation in the woman movement was most wise, sound, and discriminating. Whether in public meetings or in private counsel, he was a tower of strength to us. He went with us through the days of ridicule and of censure. He stood beside us in our appeals to the legislature. Nor did he stand for suffrage alone. He was the ready helper of every important effort in our behalf. When he appeared in the State House with those who demanded that the age of consent for girls should be raised, how wise and weighty were his arguments! I must think that the Church of the Disciples in its very beginning laid great stress upon the religious efficiency of women. The character of those whose names appear in its earliest membership would vouch for this. They were women of independent conviction and original thought, who would bear their part in devising as well as in doing. I remember that this feel-

ing of the equality of the sexes impressed me in my earliest experience of the church. I felt that we were not preached down to, not set upon a lower plane, as creatures pledged to hear and to obey, but that we were expected to come up to the level of reasonable and religious humanity, each set in her own candlestick to give her own light.

I must say a word about Mr. Clarke's appearances at the Boston Radical Club. He was not a constant attendant at its meetings; but, when he came there, it was to give forth no uncertain music. He greatly valued, I am sure, the freedom of discussion which there prevailed, and was very willing to take note of the opinions of those whose way of thinking differed much from his own. I remember one occasion on which he expressed some indignation at a rather careless statement made by Rev. John Weiss. This gentleman said that Unitarian ministers who prayed in the name of Christ were guilty of insincerity, and that he had felt this in his own case. Mr. Clarke said with some warmth: "Let Mr. Weiss speak for himself. If he has used the name of Christ insincerely, it is he who has lied, not we." I spoke of this, some time later, to Mr. Clarke, who naïvely said, "Did I show any heat in that discussion?" Yes; but it was good heat.

A feature which always impressed me in our services, as conducted by Mr. Clarke, was the absence of stereotype. We could never anticipate beforehand what we were to hear from him on any Sunday. His sermon was always a fresh interpretation of life and providence; and the title of one of his published volumes, "The Hour that cometh and now is," really indicated the general character of his preaching. The hope of the future and the lesson of the present were combined in all that he said. It must have been in part this hopefulness, this broad outlook beyond the troubles of the moment, which made him so apt a comforter of the sorrows of others. This irrepressible confidence in the triumph of good, and in the value of even the most bitter experience, carried people along with him, and lifted up the heart of the mourner to the serene height upon which the dear pastor maintained his ground.

How enviable was the gift through which he was enabled to enrich us with his own rich life, with his varied and admirable studies! The student is often carried away by the passion of acquisition. The more he knows, the less he can teach. Living men grow remote to him. His place is with the masters who can instruct him, with the spirits whose work is already made perfect. Mr. Clarke's many-sided interests gave fulness and variety to his ministry instead of impoverishing it. We were made sharers in his intellectual gains as well as in his deep spiritual experience.

I am quite aware that these reminiscences correspond very imperfectly to the duty with which I was charged on this occasion,— that of defining the place of our church in the life of the city and the times. Had I quite definitely understood this, I might not have undertaken to contribute anything to this occasion. I was drawn to this church, in the first instance, by Parker's cordial praise of its pastor, and by the confidence which I felt in the reality of its aims. It had also for me the negative merit of lying entirely without the domain of fashion. Let it not be inferred from this that I had any personal objection to fashionable people or to fashionable doings. Our dear minister had none, and I have never had any. But the worldly view of religion, although usually strictly orthodox, is yet very shallow and formal, and would have been intolerable to me after the discipline of Parker's preaching. The independence of social relations which I sought and found among the Disciples promised a refuge from the mean and hampering influences which, in the Boston of thirty years ago, were plainly to be felt. This church was isolated from the timid and temporizing policy which was then popular throughout the community. What people would say about our pastor and ourselves troubled us very little. He was at the helm of the ship, and knew the sea and the shore: we were safe and happy under his guidance.

By and by, if I mistake not, this isolation insensibly diminished. The sweet influences which had held and nourished us began to make themselves felt outside our modest circle. The magnet drew and drew and drew. Feeble and slow was

this growth; but constantly there were added to the church such as believed in its methods and spirit, and the dear minister seemed to grow with the growth of his society. I call all of you to witness how his sermons gained in depth of thought and in felicity of expression. No weariness was in him, no forcing of a reluctant mind to cope with themes whose interest had abated through their long familiarity. Each Sunday's discourse seemed better than the last, each one led us further in the way toward the perfect life. When I was allowed to see the minister after the illness which was the premonition of our loss, he told me that he should probably be obliged to have an assistant. "But," said he, "the difficulty would be that he naturally would want to preach, while I have so many sermons in my mind that I shall always wish to preach myself." And that last happy season in which his strength so wonderfully revived, how full was it of the ripe grain of his later thought! how rich was it in comfort and instruction!

When I seek the last word that I would say about our church, I find it to be the word "reconciliation." As all secular roads were said of old to lead to Rome, so might we say that all sincere ways in religion lead to a deep agreement underlying every difference. Mr. Clarke led us so much in the direction of the truths that cannot be gainsaid that he taught us, as he had taught himself, to make more account of the points in which religionists should agree than of those concerning which they may, perhaps must, differ. Our church was a sort of hostelry where the wayfarer might enter and find help, without a passport to show how he came thither. Not that our training was in any sense latitudinarian. Our leader was a man of definite and outspoken opinions, and was able to maintain these with force and warmth enough. But his mind and character were of that quality which could see into differences and beyond them.

Perhaps the church, as well as society in general, is built upon oppositions. We might compare the believing and the doubting to the opposite sides of an arch, which at first would seem unlikely to find a way of meeting. A tempo-

rary support bridges over the interval, and presently the arch is sealed with the keystone, and the two sides become one, united in a perfect and steadfast harmony. So let us say that those whose spiritual experiences appear to be the opposite each of the other are always seeking to rear some structure upon which the religious consent of the community may rest. The keystone must be supplied by the intelligence which can understand what is sought on both sides, and by the charity which, reconciling both in itself, can reconcile them with each other.

This church of ours has had its part, if I mistake not, in this important work. In the denomination to which we belong and which is pledged to just such work, we have perhaps been able to keep it in view more than have some other societies. As this office of the reconciliation of human differences is one very vital to society, religious and other, I feel that we as individuals and as a body are pledged and bound to continue it. Our dear ones whose record lies behind us motion us this way. The deep of the past and the deep of the future call to us. The clear clarion which so often sounded in this place for our spiritual awakening now leads us like a far-off bugle. Have we forgotten to what it calls us? No, brothers; no, sisters: it bids us take up the tireless march of those who press onward and ever onward toward the kingdom of God and its righteousness.

THE NEXT HALF-CENTURY.

BY CHARLES G. AMES.

When Paul was journeying toward Rome and some Christian brethren came part way to meet him, "he thanked God, and took courage." If a voice could reach us from the cloud of witnesses that gather with us to-night, would not that voice bid us thank God for the half-century past and take courage for the next?

I wish it were in my power to touch a button, or to touch your hearts, and to give the signal for a fresh start, a new departure, so as to make it certain that this church will so work in harmony with the spiritual laws and powers as to write another chapter of sacred history which can be read with gratitude and hope on the 27th of April, A.D. 1941.

Why not? Are we not as well situated and as well equipped as they were who took this sacred enterprise in hand in 1841? Think of their small number, their small resources, their many difficulties, then of our larger number, larger resources, and fairer opportunities.

But their chief resource lay in their faith that something could be done, and in their resolute purpose to do it. Have we such faith? Have we such purpose? And may we not be as sure as they that no true labor can be in vain in the Lord?

Often the history of a religious society runs like this: a candle is lighted; it shines till it is burned out; then it is never renewed; nothing is left but an empty candlestick. Many a church, outwardly prosperous perhaps, has lost its first love, spent its moral force, used up its enthusiasm, and is no more than an empty candlestick,— handsome and well polished it may be, but the light has become darkness.

We are not here to-night simply to look backward. Grate-

ful and glad for all the blessed yesterdays, we make ready for the blessed to-morrows. We would stand like servants, with their lamps trimmed and burning, and with their loins girded, waiting orders from their Lord.

We stand fronting the unknown future. Yet not wholly unknown, if we can discern the face of the sky and the signs of the times. What will the next half-century report to its successor? The same old story, no doubt,— the story of conflict between good and evil, light and darkness; the story of man's effort to get better acquainted with himself, with nature, and with God. The same old story, but with a difference; for humanity is ever passing into new phases, and changes come more rapidly than in former times.

It is certain to be a period of wide and deep changes in religious beliefs and methods. The most conservative bodies are in a state of agitation and ferment; and who dares say that there is just now in existence any formulated system of doctrine which the Church or the world ought to accept and retain as "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"?

Every church, including our own, is to be occupied in part with this high duty of rethinking, re-examining, and reconstructing its own beliefs. The winds of free inquiry are let loose; the waters are sure to be disturbed; the ship of Zion is to be tossed on waves of uncertainty; and many a sea-sick passenger is likely to mistake his own confusions for general chaos. But, as Theodore Parker once said, "the stars will keep their places, even if men's heads run round."

There will be more need than ever of churches whose faith does not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,— churches in which a man who cannot stand steadily on his logical feet, nor find any firm ground for his creed, may yet look up to the Supreme Mystery, and say, with George Macdonald:

> "Not what I think, but what Thou art,
> Makes sure."

If a man loses his confidence in the infallible Book or the infallible Church, why may there not be some clear voice

that recalls him to himself, to the constant Law, and to the all-including Reality which enfolds him?

Many are already finding out, and millions must discover in the near future, not that God is dead or absent, but that all human definitions of him are inadequate; not that this vast silent order of the universe is unmeaning, but that our conceptions are childish, and our explanations are but guesses; not that religion has no basis in man's nature or his need, but that our theories of religion must all be held subject to revision in the growing light of knowledge and experience.

This situation will make our liberal churches a providential necessity of the next half-century, as they have been of the last. They are the refuge of free and reverent seekers after God and truth and life. We cannot claim that they have freed themselves from inconsistencies, nor that they are competent to offer infallible guidance to mankind. We share the common liability to error and wrong. We join with all other churches in affirming the importance of man's coming into harmony with the higher law through an experience of the higher love; and this makes us hold tenderly to the name of the Great Teacher who has encouraged us to look for the perpetual coming of that Spirit which leads into all truth and all goodness. All the more urgent are we to win and hold a position of perfect freedom as learners. We have no need to spend any force in resisting or disparaging reason or science, nature or man. We accept all the appointments of the world as divine provisions for education. We find it easy to believe in yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, without worshipping the god Antiquity or the god Novelty. We have no fear that the true God will contradict himself, if he shall speak again and again; and we identify the Word incarnate in humanity at its best with the silent Logos of creation. No urgency is upon us to believe or disbelieve without being fully persuaded. We have no partisan or ecclesiastical interest to defend; we are tempted by no powerful bribe of property or standing to put the product of the new vintage into old wine-skins; we need not even pretend

to steer our ship by calculations based on old almanacs. We can afford to profit by criticism, and to improve our principles and methods, or to add to them, without fear of losing heavily on our old stock. There is nothing in our principles, as there should be nothing in our hearts, to prevent our instant and joyful response to any good thing that may be or has been said or done by anybody in our time or in foregoing ages. There is nothing in our organization to keep us from wheeling into line at short notice with any other bodies of earnest people who may muster for the same objects. And, in theory at least, every member of our societies is left as free in spirit and conduct as if no such societies existed. As we refuse to be mastered in conscience, so we refuse to master.

This is no ground for boasting: it is the basis of gravest responsibility. We did not choose this position: it chose us; and we hope to serve the whole Christian Church and the whole human world, as well as to serve the present age, by maintaining this great liberty of the sons of God. And this liberty is of present consequence, because it is likely to be a part — I think, a serious part — of the work of the next half-century to do two things: First, to disentangle religion from dependence on theories which may be true, but are open to question; on documents and histories which are ambiguous and obscure; and from literary, priestly, and ecclesiastical authorities that cannot be verified. Second, to incorporate into religion and into the life of mankind a great body of new knowledges and new spiritual acquisitions, which must come to be held as a part of divine revelation.

It will be a great gain if, fifty years from now, it can be generally seen and believed in the churches that Humanity is itself the Son of God; that religion is amply provided for in the nature of man; that spiritual life, like physical life, is its own evidence; that Bibles and churches and all historic products of the spirit, old and new, with whatever truth they can teach us of God or man, of duty or destiny, are a system of provisions for our spiritual life, as surely as the fruits of the field, orchard, and garden are provisions for

our bodily life; and that in both cases we have to take the risk of bad cookery and irrational use of the supplies. I think the mind of our people (in all the Protestant churches especially) is sure to be much occupied with this business, and that it will make heavy demands on patience, humility, and common sense. Nor can any human power insulate the great Roman Catholic Church from the same modifying forces.

Many are predicting that during the next half-century America will be partly Romanized. Let me predict also that Romanism is to be partly Americanized. And this is a process which can be greatly furthered by simple fairness and justice on our part toward all these people who, like their children after them for a thousand years, are to be joint citizens with us and our children of this mighty republic. If the Romish priesthood cannot retain control of the populations of countries like Italy, France, Spain, and Brazil, where they have had a full monopoly for many generations, I think we may take it for granted that free institutions, which have been one of the attractions drawing Roman Catholic and other immigration to these shores, will produce in them the same love and loyalty which they have nourished in ourselves. Fifty years farther on, the great majority of parish priests, and also of the higher clergy, will be of American birth; and their devotion to the Church will be powerfully modified by American influences.

We have more cause to fear that great masses of our countrymen, both of Catholic and Protestant antecedents, will fall into moral indifference, apathy, materialism, and sensuality; that the greed of gain, the love of luxury, the coarse appetites of men, the frivolity of women, the selfishness of the prosperous and the misery of the poor, will neutralize the nobler sentiments, defile the Church itself, and lower the whole level of civilization. In working the moral and spiritual agencies of rescue, prevention, and education, I think we must make common cause with those who differ from us in theory and practice, if only they are working in good faith for the elevation of mankind.

The next half-century is to be a period of social agitation and readjustment. I think it is not the province of the Church to decide questions of political economy, nor to determine the forms of legislation, nor directly to reconstruct the social order. Some of these matters can best be dealt with by scientific students, experts, and practical business men. Some of them belong to statesmen, in consultation with the whole people. But the future form of civilized and industrial society is unpredictable by human wisdom and uncontrollable by human power. It must be the product of many factors, some of which are hidden. It must be the outcome of evolution.

But the Church, if it be pure and true and wise and brave, is to render a greater social service than any other agent. At last, and in the large way, all questions are to be decided and the course of events is to be directed by the quality of the population. And it is with the quality of the population that the Church has chiefly to deal. "The spirit in which we act is the highest matter," says Goethe. As the sun in heaven shows the ways by which men may safely walk the earth, so does the light of spiritual truth show to society the path that leads upward out of selfishness, cruelty, avarice, injustice, and unbrotherly crowding.

The temper in which we pursue our inquiries and deliberations, the temper of the men who meet in our capitals to frame the laws, the temper which men carry into business and politics, into public and private affairs, will have more to do with the weal or woe of our country than any special scheme of reform or philanthropy; for the best scheme will fail if the people are unfit for it, and the most skilful pilot will be helpless if the crew are in mutiny, or if the ship does not answer her helm.

All the more important is it that the Church itself shall not be blood-poisoned by the disorders of the world, or by the false and foul principles against which she is called to wage war. Amid the antagonisms of classes and the riot of passions, the Church must rise above the errors and evils of the age, and say to all men, as with the Father's voice of

loving reproof, "Sirs, ye are brethren: why do ye wrong one to another?" I have faith enough in God and in man to believe that we shall be led into a right and wise way of settling all the perplexing practical questions, if our people can be inspired to deal with them in a right spirit and with patient reasonableness. Every student, statesman, and reformer is to find his best ally in the Church, if the Church can but recover and keep its vital connection with modern society by being vitalized itself.

What is true, right, good, just? These questions have come to stay till they are settled. Every living church must be largely occupied with them during the next half-century. What a good school can do for the general intelligence, a true church must do for the general virtue.

Fifty years farther on, city and country, Church and State, will be in other hands. But those hands may be guided or misguided by these. What we do in our time will surely help or hinder the powers that "make for righteousness" in the middle of the twentieth century. Plant a tree to-day that bears wholesome fruit or poisonous, somebody will then eat the fruit. Open a fountain of good or evil, the stream will flow on, as blessing or as curse, to generations yet unborn.

> "For the common deeds of the common day
> Are ringing bells in the far away."

The world is moving: shall we stand still? All standards are advancing,—in education, in the arts and sciences, in society, in the styles of life. The Church also must advance. Indeed, she must keep ahead, she must lead, or lose the right to exist. What use can God or man have for a church that is lukewarm or laggard, or for a church that is merely a survival of traditions and conventionalities, or for a church that has ceased to be a living voice, and has become merely an echo?

The new times upon which we are entering will ring with a demand for reality, and every pretension will be sharply challenged. Shall we not joyfully recognize the prompting

of the Spirit of Truth in this growing scorn of religious shams? Can we give to our Discipleship any lower or narrower significance than perpetual pupilage, perpetual openness of heart and mind to any light which God may let shine?

To accomplish our small part in the large work of the new age, let us sharpen and improve our tools and our wits; let us welcome every hint that may help us to larger resources, wiser methods, higher vantage-ground. We want the best of everything; for nothing is too good for our great cause,— the cause to which the Eternal Power continually gives light and love, the cause to which Jesus gave his life and invites us to give ours,— the cause of Human Perfection, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

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